

Tan Is your thesis the story of the Margaret Eaton School.....?

JB: Yes.

Tan And how did you happen to choose it?

JB: I wrote a paper on women in physical education and I ran across Florence Somers name. Florence Somers was the principal of the Margaret Eaton's School so I thought "What is this Margaret Eaton's School?"

Tan Yes, oh I see.

JB: And once I started the Margaret Eaton School then, of course, the Camp Tanamakoon came in then I spoke to Murial, she mentioned that you people met the first Monday of every month so I thought oh I would try and join you. Some of the information of this luncheon will get into the dissertation but I'm thinking more of it in terms of just kind of another project. Just kind of a side line.

Tan I think Nadine you should start about where you came from and how you happened to go to camp.

Tan That's a good place to start.

Tan It's a lovely story.

Tan I was sent by a lady who just took care of me because she was a friend of my mother's. My mother died so she sent me to school and to camp and I was very lucky, I must say.

Tan She came from another country too.

Tan Oh, I came from Hungary. From Budapest.

Tan And you're a great pianist.

Tan No, I'm not.

Tan Yes she certainly is!

Tan I used to try to be, but ah..

Tan She has a beautiful voice.

Tan She still plays beautifully.

Tan I don't play that much any more. I teach all day long.

Tan Still?

Tan Yes, I have to.

Tan In piano?

Tan Yes.

Tan You were sort of a protegee at Miss Hamilton's place.

Tan Oh yes, Miss Hamilton looked after me too. She sent me and in New York she sent me to a singing teacher, paid for it.

Tan John, Nadine's music and her singing out on the canoe and her superb playing at the piano meant music to all of us at camp. It gave us all a love of music. There we were listening to this wonderful music at a beautiful spot and that's what Nadine is not saying.

JB: I've heard that already too.

Tan You did?

JB: Yes.

Tan That's very nice.

Tan She used to play for the Margaret Eaton.

Tan Oh, that was just for the gymnastics. I used to stay in September ... when they came up for the camp and I stayed and just played for the

gymnastics.

JB: As accompanist? How did that work actually? I know there was accompanists but what songs would you play?

Tan Oh gosh! I can't remember ... just for rhythms. For the exercises.

JB: Okay, anything with a beat?

Tan Yes, but not jazzy of course.

JB: It tended to be more classical?

Tan Oh yes, everything was ... and rhythmical. You know there is lots of classical music, it's all rhythmical.

Tan Actually, there is another question that is related to this one because you said Mary Hamilton paid for it and she did a lot for the school she did a lot to get the camp going but where did she make all this money?

Tan At the camp.

JB: Just from the camp?

Tan Yes. It was really her vegetables getting cash.

Tan Did you hear what she said?!

Tan No, I'll get it later.

Tan Mary's vegetables. That's marvellous.

Tan Leave out anything I say.

Tan No one inside is funnier than the real thing.

Tan I didn't hear that either.

Tan She said that her vegetables would make so much money ...

Tan I wouldn't have thought a camp was a lucrative thing.

Tan Neither would I.

Tan She was at the Margaret Eaton School and she got paid for that. She was a teacher. She taught physical education.

Tan I thought she was the founder of it.

JB: No, Emma Scott Raff and she married George Nasmith. So she was the founder.

Tan Oh. I remember Mrs. Nasmith and I remember Mr. Nasmith and ...

Tan What do you remember about them then?

Tan Nothing much. Just that they visited the camp. That's all.

Tan And how often then? Just once or twice?

Tan It must have been once or twice because I don't remember.

Tan I remember her name.

Tan I'd seen her with Mary G. because I used to see Mary G. all the time.

Tan That's Mary G. Hamilton.

Tan Right.

Tan He knows that.

Tan Well I wasn't sure.

Tan He calls her Mary Hamilton.

Tan Who calls her Mary Hamilton?

Tan John.

Tan Well everyone calls her Mary G.. So you can call her Mary G. too.

JB: I'll have to change my dissertation...

Tan You were mentioning activities, not that I should get off on off Nadine. Do you want to go on to that?

JB: Okay.

Tan The activities ... I loved sailing and they had two sail boats and one was called the Mary G. and the other was called Louise. Now who was that?

Tan Louise Burns.

Tan And that was at 15. Things could be quite different now...

Tan Well if anyone wants to go on about sailing.

Tan Think of other activities. Oh archery was the other one I liked. We had archery up in the woods.

Tan Horseback riding.

Tan We had horseback riding in the early years. They had horses at the camp.

JB: Not in the later years then?

Tan No, it got to be too expensive to feed the horses.

Tan They ate too much hay.

JB: When did you go to camp?

Tan 1926.

Tan 1925.

Tan Helen went in the first year.

Tan It opened in '25.

Tan And I can remember right at this minute sitting here and two barges with boards and we sat and went through the and got off at Cash Lake and here were all these little creatures - we had never seen each other before - and we were sitting on these boards going through the Alabasky River and then they went back and got all our luggage and the second. And on the first day we had to wear long black stockings and terrible bloomers...

JB: You went by train...

Tan ...oh we went by train - overnight at Melbourne. The train trip took overnight...

Tan Oh yes and everybody took all the goodies to eat on the train ... I mean we weren't supposed to bring a meal but this was a lot of fun. And we got off just outside the park and had breakfast and got on the train again.

JB: Were there many campers the first year when you were there?

Tan There were about 35; the second month about 16. And I mean in those days it was just a wilderness that's why we had to be covered up. Long shirts and long stockings, because of all the bugs, and those horrible bloomers.

JB: How did you hear about the camp? Did your mother hear about it from someone?

Tan Oh I don't know. My cousin Kay Masters, Kay Hogh-Masters went and we both started in the same time, I don't know.

JB: So Mary Hamilton started small I guess?

Tan Yes, but it ended up there were 24 of our relations have gone, all the cousins and the cousins' children.

Tan What a lovely thing.

Tan Yes, well Kay couldn't be here today but Kay, my sister and myself all went the second year and we lay on iron law and we looked at pictures from camp and it was a very crude joke and we looked at this and thought "Ooh, look at this and that." And after that we thought we'd ask for this cabin and it turned out to be the infirmary. Well I cried for a whole week, I was so homesick when I got there and I leaned against a pine tree and got pine gum on me and I was never able to get it out for the whole month. But anyways when we left we cried again because we didn't want to go home. And we had a song "I Don't Want to go Home".

JB: So you stayed the entire summer then?

Tan I was up there for two months for four years.

Tan The rule was you could stay for one month or two months. Now you can stay for a week or two weeks if you want.

Tan It's very expensive now too.

JB: So you started in '25 and '26 and Nadine?

Tan I think it must have been ... how many years after you started?

Tan You were about 15.

Tan I was about 10 and you were about ...

Tan But I was in the cabin with you.

Tan Oh yes I know so...

Tan So how many years after you were there?

Tan Well how old were you when you started, 13?

Tan 16.

Tan Yes you were older and I was 6 years later.

Tan Did you come...?

Tan No, my two sisters were campers almost since the beginning but I didn't come until I was

Tan I came to Canada in 1927 and it must have been about 2 years after, '29 or '30.

Tan You were definitely there in '30, I think you were there in '29 because I was there in '29.

JB: Well that's fairly early on. And you joined when?

Tan About '31. I came up to September camp and I slept in the infirmary all by myself and there was a bear underneath the cabin...

Tan Is this Margaret Eaton?

Tan No, this was the first fall that Margaret Eaton didn't come and I can remember the bear and freezing in bed and I wondered if he'd come through the screen doors. But we used to have wonderful canoe trips - that Indian guide. They didn't have young boys like now.

Tan The music is different now too.

Tan Nadine, when you talked about activities tell him about theatre night and the musical things you used to put on.

Tan Well we used to do the theatre. Ann Fergeson and I. Fergie and I used to do things together. She would do the play (drama) and I would do the music for it. It was just for fun.

Tan It was the highlight of the week really.

Tan We had a beautiful theatre which the campers made under supervision.
Who supervised? Somebody must have.

Tan Dora Mavor-Moore just came for a year or two.

Tan She wasn't there when I was there.

JB: Do you remember her then?

Tan Oh yes! Very well, I even played one of her plays down here, not the piano. What was it? Henry VIII's wife. One of them.

Tan Any other activities anyone wants to talk about?

Tan Well the first year you went swimming and paddling and that was about all you did and maybe they did have a sail boat, I can't remember. This was it. You didn't have all kinds of tests every night you just went paddling around the lake.

Tan And we still wanted to go back.

Tan One interesting fact about Dora Mavor-Moore was that her son was there, Frank, and he and I made a small theatre of the theatre that was made by everyone. Remember that? We had puppet shows in it. The first one was a concert by Paderisky and someone made a beautiful piano and little Paderisky was sitting there playing and I was playing in the back.

Tan The theatre wasn't a theatre was it? The theatre wasn't an enclosed theatre, it was just a background and everybody sat on the ground.

Tan It had beautiful curtains with deer stencilled on it. Pine trees and deer. And campers.

Tan The lights in the theatre were made of tin cans that we had and the light was behind us. It was really fun.

Tan There was also some land sports like tennis. Or was tennis quite a bit later?

Tan Yes, there was a tennis court.

Tan We didn't have a lot of tennis because you can do that in other places.

Tan Wasn't that Mrs. Hamilton's philosophy that camp should offer what you couldn't get any where else? That's why canoe trips and paddling were sort of a highlight.

Tan And sailing.

Tan And camp crafts.

JB: What would you do for camp crafts?

Tan We learn how to build fires and things like that before you went on a canoe trip.

Tan We had to do it with just one match.

Tan Get a fire with one match. That was the challenge!

Tan Nadine, what I want to tell him is what Miss Hamilton created at that camp and what she did for all of us. Miss Hamilton was a woman of very few words we were all a bit nervous of her...

Tan ...but we also adored her...

Tan ...but she instilled in us all the things that still count for us now like the love of nature, the love of the lake, the love of the sky, the love of beauty, the trees,...

Tan ...also the love of God...

Tan ...yes, the love of God, and the love of music but she didn't talk a lot

about it. One thing she hated, well no, she wasn't really in favour of Parent's Day like they have now. The parents come up all the time, Miss. Hamilton was really gauche with the parents. She didn't like when the parents came and the parents didn't know why we all loved her so much, did they? And she used to say, "I don't give a continental". And when I was a counsellor I did something quite bad like imitate someone all day long to try and get her accent and at the end of the day, Ginty's sister and I were sitting washing our feet at the dock and Miss Hamilton said, "You know you two are the youngest and most unimportant counsellors at this camp and the camp could run perfectly without you. And you were heard imitating someone all day long across the lake. I don't mind if I were to never see you two again." And Ginty and I went right on washing our feet and our mouths were stuck together and we didn't know if we were going to be sent home that day. Boy, there was no more imitation of that English lady. We had spent the day perfecting it. Again, Miss Hamilton didn't say very much, she just said, "The camp will be fine without you two." Nadine did something bad too. On the canoe trip she upset the canoe and you just about went home too.

Tan And I never went on another canoe trip after that.

Tan So there you are.

Tan You weren't allowed to!?

Tan And the chapel was lovely it was just outside. You took a cushion if you wanted and sat on the ground. It was just a rustic structure which we had built too and as Mary, another friend of ours, Mary Mitchell-Galley said we got more out of those sermons every Sunday from Miss Hamilton than years and years of Bishop Strachan School where we went and chapel everyday and never little talks.

Tan The counsellors used to give sermons.

Tan She created things in us that we never knew we had.

Tan Also the thing we had to learn is democracy, remember?

Tan When ever we meet we always say I wonder if Hammy is looking down on us because she ...

Tan ...she thought of us as being her children...

Tan ...She wasn't a bit maternal though it was just that we would represent what she hoped we would, I think, the part of her she gave to us.

Tan But you know, when we were counsellors we had a meeting all the time about the children in our cabins and I remember the time when that girl was there who just couldn't get along with anybody, she was very shy. She was very unusual. So she asked who would take special care of this girl so I told her I would. I had to go and see Hammy every day and report what happened to this girl.

Tan Did you notice a difference at the end? Did she come out of herself?

Tan No, she was just the same and she never came to any of our meetings afterwards or anything, like if we had a luncheon or something in the wintertime.

Tan I can remember my interview for counsellors, the first time I met Mary G. we went over to the hotel for luncheon, just the two of us, I had

ordered and she sat down and I wondered after all she'd open the conversation "Can you swim?" "Yes." "Can you dive?" "Yes." "Can you ride?" "Yes." "Can you play tennis?" "Yes." And this went right through then she said, this was how blunt she was, to the point, "Which do you do best?" I said, "I do several things the same." Well that did not go over well at all. I should have liked one the best.

Tan She wanted you to be a counsellor.

Tan And this was the point of it and I just realized what she had asked me to lunch for I had only guessed memories. So she asked me if I would come to camp but I said Miss Hamilton I can't come to camp because I got a job and can't take the summer off.

Tan How did she become a friend to everybody?

Tan She was short and abrupt yet you warmed up to her.

Tan We admired her very much and she was the kindest person in the world.

Tan I don't think she ever slept much because when we were counsellors we knew how to launch the canoes at night and go out to smoke on the lake and we knew how to bring the canoes and paddles in without one single sound. We'd all paddle like Indians the way you don't take you paddles out. You know, Miss Hamilton would know in the morning which ones came in at one or two, doing such innocent things as looking at the moon and smoking. But she knew who had been out. And the mischievous counsellors were always put with the good ones so I always ended up with the nature counsellor, who was so good and serious, and who-knows-what under the bed and I had a counsellor with no sense of humour for a cabin mate because two would be too many for us. And I called her Slug and she was very good and quiet and had never been called Slug in her life. See if you reminisce like this you can cut out anything that you like, can't you?

JB: Actually what I'll do is type it all up in some kind of order but it won't have names on it because I won't be able to piece the names on it. So it will be a collection of thoughts of some camp Tanamakooners.

Tan I think the best part of it for me was that we all accepted each other, loved each other, had fun together and kidded each other which we continue to do until this moment. And that is very magical in life, I think. You know when we meet - we've been meeting for I don't know how many years - we wouldn't say don't you think Helen Hobbs would wear another colour. We don't talk about each other behind our backs. We all know our faults very well. And we all know Nadine is the queen of the songs, she never thinks she is. She's so modest...

Tan ...I should wear a crown...

Tan ...but she is.

JB: Do you remember some of the other counsellors? We already talked about Dora Mavor Moore but how about Dorothy Jackson?

Tan Oh yes, she gave me a bawling out for dumping the sail boat.

Tan She was wonderful.

Tan She taught sailing, didn't she?

Tan She did it after Louise Burns died.

Tan And swimming.
Tan She taught at M.E. and Margaret Eaton.
Tan She was very perfectionist.
Tan Elizabeth and Dorothy were inseparable.
Tan They weren't the same type at all. Elizabeth became the head of camp.
Tan She bought Tanamakoon afterwards.
Tan What would you say about her? She was sort of reserved too, wasn't she but she was a much softer person than Dorothy Jackson was.
Tan She was more boyish.
JB: Dorothy Jackson was?
Tan Yes.
Tan Very attractive. A lot of people had crushes on her. On both of them I think.
Tan I think you 're right.
Tan You had one on Miss Moore if I remember.
Tan Yes I did!
Tan So did I!
Tan These were the innocent days when anybody was in or out of a cupboard.
Tan ...Some grandchildren like Helen.
Tan This year?
Tan Oh about 10 years ago she went.
Tan Betty and Farahlee who was another one her sort of a step-grandchild, her son married somebody, was a child, and Betty's daughters I guess, I don't know if they went or not, but apparently this son went up to see his stepchild, girl, and so Betty said "How did you like it?" And he said, "It was quite rustic."
Tan Somebody said that the other day, now who was that? But I was quite surprised because I never thought...
Tan Now we all washed our clothes in the lake, in those days we hadn't heard of pollution, we washed our teeth in the lake for the first few years.
Tan We had big wash tubs and scrubbed clothes and iron them on the canoes.
JB: And you all had the same uniform?
Tan Oh yes. It turned out to be quite nice.
Tan The green and tan.
Tan It was khaki.
Tan I was just wondering, is it the same colour as Branksome? Branksome Hall?
Tan They have kilts and beige blouses, I think.
Tan So they have different colours.
Tan You know one significant thing Miss Hamilton did for us was the war guests came over to the different schools, the different camps, including Miss Hamilton absorbed 40 or more English children which she had there for 3 or 4 years. So they all got the Tanamakoon feeling and I believe there were signs in the camp like how many miles to London. I think Miss Hamilton helped Canadianize a lot of foreign kids. Because my family came from Mexico and my two sisters went right near the beginning and I almost felt they became Canadians through being at camp.

She did that for all the war guests as well.

Tan Do you remember at one time the camp finances were very low and we had some kind of a tea to raise money?

Tan No.

Tan I vaguely remember.

Tan That was for the association, I think. Wasn't that down at Eaton's College.

Tan The camp fell upon hard times also.

Tan And my father was always figuring out how much she was making.

Tan That was during the '30s. The depression.

Tan Well Miss Hamilton found it hard to get campers at that time. So I think she had an apartment on St. George and she went to Florida early in the winter time so she thought she would engage somebody before camp to try and market the camp. And guess who it was? Me. So I was marketing the camp and I had a heck of a good time you see because Miss Hamilton was in Florida and I'd sit around in the window and getting a lovely tan and hardly ever phone anybody to go. Anyways a few people phoned the office and ask me about camp and one lady asked me if the water was very deep around the dock and I said very deep. I didn't know the answers so I said any old thing. So she wondered if there was a net underneath the kiddies and I said sure. The camping enrolment went swell that year and I drove to Burlington and all these places talking about camp but the problem was that the mothers and fathers used to fix me a drink before I began talking about it and I wasn't accustomed to liquor at all and by the end I was saying yes to everything. And when Miss Hamilton came back from Florida guess who was the brownest? I was. I can't say what year it was but it was probably my first and last job in that direction.

Tan Now are you contacting any of the Eaton family to see what they remember?

Tan Who would he talk to? Margaret Eaton is dead.

Tan Nora Eaton lives in the States.

Tan Florence Mary...

Tan Good thing you got us now or we may be all dead by next year.

JB: Back to Dorothy Jackson. One person said to me, and I was kind of puzzled by it, this person said she was kind of a radical in her personal life for that time.

Tan Radical?!

Tan I think she was a feminist.

Tan We wouldn't though.

Tan I wonder what they meant though.

JB: Well I asked and she said, "Well, you know what I mean." Well I said I heard she was quite strick and so on and she said "Well I really shouldn't say."

Tan ...She was a strong feminist? Or a lesbian?

Tan We never mentioned that word nor did we want to but I would suspect that was probably what she was.



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